

## **Monroe County Pet-Friendly Special Needs Sheltering Plan**

**Presented for Monroe County  
Board of County Commissioner Review**

**By:**

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- I. Overview**
- II. Hurricane Special Needs and Pet-Friendly Shelter Locations**
- III. Shelter Staffing**
- IV. Standard Operating Procedure**
- V. Shelter Floor Plans**
  - **Harvey Government Center**
  - **Sugarloaf Elementary School**
  - **Stanley Switlik Elementary School**
  - **Coral Shores High School**
  - **Key Largo School**
- VI. Sheltering forms – Owner**
  - **Emergency Shelter Agreement**
  - **Emergency Transportation Agreement**
  - **Pet Registration and Agreement**
- VII. Volunteer forms**
  - **MC Volunteer Application Form (2 pages)**
  - **Disaster Response Volunteer Intake Form**
  - **Animal Relief Volunteer Badges**

## **MONROE COUNTY SPECIAL NEEDS PET SHELTERING PLAN**

After Hurricane Andrew devastated South Florida in 1992, state emergency response personnel realized the convergence of animal and people issues during a disaster. They learned that, under adverse circumstances, the ultimate safety of many of Florida's citizens depends on the safety of their pets, domestic and exotic, and the livestock they tend. Until that time, people in harm's way were told by state emergency management to evacuate their home, but to leave their pets. Relaying this information has often created situations where animals were technically neglected and/or abandoned and it added additional stress to people who evacuate without their animals. These scenarios produce serious complications for Emergency Management.

It stands to reason, if humans were at risk from an impending cataclysm, so were the lives of animals, and visa versa. We now understand that many people, especially the elderly, simply do not abandon their companion animals, even in life-threatening situations. In 1994, Governor Lawton Chiles mandated that all Florida counties provide means to accommodate animals, domestic and livestock, in times of emergency events. Emergency protocol ESF-17 is a result of that edict.

Special Needs clients who evacuate to shelter in Monroe County with their pets may have several options for housing companion animals. Choices include boarding kennels, veterinarian offices, hotels and motels, and the designated pet-friendly shelters. It is important that all of these options be available at any given time during an evacuation.

Whether due to need, lack of planning, or rapid onset of an event that overwhelms local animal housing options in which even the most responsible pet owner can be caught in a resources pinch, emergency sheltering for Special Needs clients should be enhanced to include companion animals. The stress of a disaster for both citizens in general and for emergency response and management will be alleviated by not encouraging the separation of owners from their pets and by host locals offering and marketing as many options to animal owners as possible. In an effort to provide the service of a pet-friendly emergency shelter in Monroe County the Special Needs Registry has devised guidelines for the emergency sheltering of Special Needs Client's animals in Monroe County.

Meetings have occurred with various Monroe County employees and community partners regarding emergency sheltering of pets for Special Needs clients. The following people have been consulted:

Commissioner Dixie Spehar – Monroe County Commissioner  
Jim Malloch – Community Services Director  
Jerry Eskew – MC Transportation Senior Administrator  
Anna Haskins – Special Needs Registry Coordinator  
Jim Timony – Veterans Affairs  
Danise Henriquez – MC Tax Collector  
Ron Rodamer – Sugarloaf Volunteer Fire Dept.  
Brenda Beckmann – MC Trauma Emergency Management  
Bill Grumhaus – Risk Management Director  
Charles Ingraham – Veterans Affairs Director  
Mark Anderson – Harvey Building Facilities Maintenance  
Laura Bevan – US Humane Society Tallahassee  
Dean Humfleet – FKSPCA Director (Lower Keys Animal Shelter)  
CeCe Crane - Kritter Patrol President  
Michael Henriquez – MC School Board – Safety Director  
Fred Sims – MC School Board - Facilities Director  
Alan Roberts – MC School Board – Assistant Director of Facilities  
Jim Hall – Assistant Principal Sugarloaf Elementary  
Harry Russell Jr. - Assistant Principal Stanley Switlik Elementary  
Ron Martin – Assistant Principal Coral Shores High School  
Darren Pace – Assistant Principal Key Largo Elementary  
Linda Gottwaldt – Middle Keys Animal Shelter Director  
Tom and Marsha Garretson - Upper Keys Animal Shelter  
Capt. David Worthy – Salvation Army  
Jerry O’Cathey – Emergency Management Administrator  
Irene Toner – Emergency Management Director  
Billy Wagner – Emergency Management Senior Director  
Chief Clark Martin – MC Fire Chief  
Chief William Wagner – Islamorada Fire Rescue Chief  
Chief Hans Wagner – Marathon Fire Rescue Chief  
Chief Sergio Garcia – MC Emergency Medical Services  
Suzanne Hutton – Assistant County Attorney  
Dr. Suzanna May – MC Health Dept Director

This listing is not all-inclusive as many others were contacted for their involvement, expertise and advice. We relied on agencies throughout the state to gain perspective and gather information regarding the components of this plan. The County Attorney's Office and Risk Management Department raised issues regarding discrimination, liability including for cross ventilation contamination.

- As long as it is clear that the County is not instituting this program as a permanent service and that it is limited to Special Needs clients in particularly vulnerable housing, there should not be any problem with discrimination. This is a trial program which would survive only as long as it is economically and tactically feasible to provide it to the specified Special Needs Clients. This is a small enough sector of the community that the basics can be put in place in order to see if the program would work. If this trial program is successful and other issues, such as increased shelter capacity, can be solved, Monroe County could look at instituting a program for the "general population".
- There always is an issue of liability when the County undertakes any action. Liability in this case can be significantly contained by taking precautionary measure against injurious contact between people and pets in shelters, and by requiring both the clients whose animals are accommodated through this program and the volunteers who work with the sheltered pets to sign releases or waivers from liability.
- There should be no cross ventilation contamination because the designated pet areas in each of the shelters would ensure no "common" air elements. The animals are housed in separate buildings or units running off a completely separate air handling unit.

The Health Department raised the question of communicable diseases which has been addressed by separating the pets from the people. Also, the clients and any workers handling the pets will be provided with the appropriate sanitation supplies.

As in past evacuations, MC will provide Special Needs Registry (SNR) Clients with shelter in pre-determined locations throughout the county. In the event of a category 3, 4, or 5 storm, MC will evacuate the clients by school bus to Florida International University (FIU) in Miami. An ever-increasing number of SNR clients refuse to evacuate and leave their pets behind. Therefore, the following plan addresses this need while not

compromising the safety of the SNR population. Our primary focus is on the elderly and disabled clients who reside in mobile homes, trailers, RVs, boats and campgrounds as well as those in substandard structures and in low-lying areas.

In a category 1 or 2 storm, Special Needs clients from the above-specified types of residences will be permitted to bring their pre-registered pets to shelter with them. Such clients and their pre-registered pets in a category 3, 4, or 5 storm will be transported out of the county to a location which is still “to be determined”. The pets will be sheltered in an area separate from both the general population and Special Needs clients without pets. This pet room will have all of the basic requirements of the regular shelter site. Each pre-determined room is on a separate air-handler than the other shelter rooms. This negates the possibility of citizens with allergies to animals being exposed to allergens that may affect their health. The animals will be taken care of by animal shelter staff, county staff and volunteers.

In some areas it may be possible to house the owners with their pets. Obviously this would be ideal because it would nearly eliminate the need for extra staff. It would also lead to a stress-free environment for the pets and their owners because they would have someone familiar caring for them. If at all possible arrangements will be made for the clients to stay with their pets. However, as it stands now, the clients and their animals will be housed in separate rooms.

Clients will be required to pre-register their pets and show proof of vaccinations. They will also be required to provide food and other necessities, such as medications, for their pets. The pet shall arrive in an appropriate pet carrier or cage. This is where the pet is to remain throughout its stay in the shelter. Owners will be permitted to have their animals out of the cage as needed for brief recreation breaks and relief breaks provided that the pet is on a leash. The times for these breaks will be determined by the pet-friendly shelter staff.

Volunteers will be utilized whenever available. Residents from the animal lovers community are being encouraged to volunteer their time so that we will have people that are used to handling pets and caring for them. Following are some of the community resources that have been contacted: Pet shops, Pet affiliated groups, veterinarians and their staff, pet grooming establishments, and more.

Any problems requiring law enforcement attention will be addressed by the law enforcement officer available on site. If a law enforcement officer is not on site the call will be referred to 911 and contact should be made with law enforcement through the regular channels. The various law enforcement agencies throughout the keys including Monroe County Sheriff's Office and Key West Police Department have agreed to have at least one member of their agency available at each Special Needs site. Health emergencies and problems will be handled by the EMT/paramedics assigned to the Special Needs shelters. EMS and the various fire departments throughout the keys have agreed to have at least one EMT or paramedic available for the Special Needs Shelters.

## **HURRICANE SPECIAL NEEDS AND PET SHELTER LOCATIONS \***

**Key West Area** – Harvey Government Center - 1200 Truman Ave, Key West.

- Registered Special Needs Residents – Commissioner’s Chambers – 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.
- Pets – Senior Center (to the left of the main building). \*\*
- General Population – Commissioner’s Meeting Room

**Lower Keys including Sugarloaf** – Sugarloaf Elementary School – 255 Crane Blvd, Sugarloaf Key.

- Registered Special Needs Residents – Cafetorium. \*\*\*
- Pets – Locker rooms – Which are located to the left and right of the weight room. \*\*
- General Population - Cafetorium

**Middle Keys including Marathon** – Stanley Switlik Elementary School – 3400 Overseas Highway, Marathon.

- Registered Special Needs Residents – Room 106 – Building 10 1<sup>st</sup> floor. \*\*\*
- Pets – Room 213 – Building 10 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. Building 10 is the wing right across from the Cafetorium. \*\*
- General Population – Cafetorium

**Islamorada Area** – Coral Shores High School – 89901 US Hwy 1, Tavernier.

- Registered Special Needs Residents – Cafeteria – With your back to US1 the Cafeteria is the building on the far right of the school. You walk down the RH sided corridor and you will see the picnic benches. Behind the benches are the doors. \*\*\*
- Pets – Rooms 2-001 and 2-004 – The girls and boys locker rooms. If you continue down the same corridor that the Cafeteria is located in, towards the very end you will see the locker rooms on the RH side. \*\*



- General Population – Cafeteria

**Upper Keys and Key Largo** – Key Largo Elementary School – 104801 Overseas Highway, Key Largo.

- Special Needs Residents- Room 626. Room 626 is on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor in the rear building of the school. If you are going North on US1 and pass the school you will come upon a side street on the RH side. This is the entrance to the rear of the school and the bus drop off. The first building you come upon is our building. \*\*\*
- Pets – Locker rooms – The locker rooms are located across from the Gymnasium. If you are standing in the rear of the school facing US1 the gym is behind you to the left. Walk down the length of the building and at the end there is a walkway. On the RH side of the walkway is the entrance to the Locker rooms. \*\*
- General Population – Cafetorium

\* Note: See attached pages for maps of each location

\*\* Note: Separate air handlers ensure no cross ventilation. Each location is large enough to sufficiently shelter the total possible number of pets. In most cases the clients are very close to their pets and will be able to access them during sheltering. The only deviation from this is during the storm.

\*\*\* Note: Depending on need each location has various alternative spaces identified for shelter space, staffing, and other issues.

## **Special Needs “Pet Friendly” Shelter Staffing**

### **Harvey Government Center**

2 – County Staff in rotating shifts  
2 – Animal Shelter Employees in rotating shifts  
1- Kritter Patrol Volunteer  
Possible volunteers from animal support organizations

### **Sugarloaf Elementary School**

2 – County Staff in rotating shifts  
1 – Animal Shelter Employee  
1 – Kritter Patrol Volunteer  
Possible volunteers from animal support organizations

### **Switlik Elementary**

2 – County Staff in rotating shifts  
1 – Animal Shelter Employee  
Possible volunteers from animal support organizations

### **Coral Shores High School**

2 – County Staff in rotating shifts  
1 – Animal Shelter Employee  
Possible volunteers from animal support organizations

### **Key Largo Elementary**

2 – County Staff in rotating shifts  
2 – Animal Shelter Employees in rotating shifts  
Possible volunteers from animal support organizations

## **STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP)**

### **I. LOCATION**

Pet-friendly shelter locations will be those designated by Monroe County Animal Control Staff as meeting the safety standards for humans and/or animals. Areas for animal sheltering shall meet the following minimum requirements:

#### **Cats, Dogs, Birds Area**

This area should be large enough to separate species and, if necessary, quarantine for health and safety of animals, owners, and volunteers. Separate areas should be designated for dogs, cats, and other small animals; Owners will be required to bring records of recent vaccinations, identification tags or collars, documentation of animal work status, i.e. seeing eye, disability assistance, NASAR certification, etc.

This area should be easy to clean and disinfect, preferably with concrete, tile or vinyl flooring that can easily be hosed out, floor drainage is desirable. There should be access to running water, with available hoses if necessary. Lighting should be adequate to all areas, indoors and outdoors.

The facility should be large enough to set up a relief and/or exercise area if outdoor conditions are unfavorable.

#### **FARM / EXOTIC ANIMALS**

At this time there are no facilities available for accommodating farm and/or exotic animals. People who have these types of animals should have their own plans in place for hurricane season.

### **II. TRANSPORTATION**

Clients may (if able) choose to transport their animals to the pet-friendly shelter on their own or they can be transported by Monroe County Transit buses to the shelter. These clients and their pets will be transported separately from the Special Needs Clients who do not have pets. Clients must meet all that is required of them before they will be authorized to be transported with their pets to the pet-friendly shelter. Along with their pet registration forms each client to be transported by Monroe County Transit will be required to sign an Emergency Transportation Agreement a copy of which is located in the forms section of this packet.

### **III. SET-UP AND SHUT-DOWN**

#### **A. Building**

Check list to use prior to use of facility:

- Operational water and power
- Adequate lighting
- Ingress and egress through all doors, including emergency exits
- Building security
- Readily available and tagged (within past 12 months) fire extinguishers

- Operational ventilation
- Location and functionality of restrooms

**B. Registration and Intake Area**

Located near the animal area entrance, but not a narrow, cramped space. If co-located with a “people” shelter, have clear directions to pet facility. All animal areas will be clearly marked with signs.

**C. Staff and Volunteer Coordination Area**

Will be near the registration area for check-in and checkout, and coordination of duties.

**D. Define Animal Areas**

NO ANIMAL WILL BE OUTSIDE ITS CONTAINER WITHOUT A LEASH AND IDENTIFICATION. No animal can be accepted, unless circumstances become dire, without proof of a valid vaccination for rabies. Only staff and trained volunteers or animal owners will be allowed to remove any animal from its container.

1. **TRIAGE** – This is where animals are tagged, examined, and sent to the appropriate area. The registration agent will ensure that upon arrival each owner has equipment, covers, litter boxes, leashes, food and water bowls, etc., necessary for the care of their pet. Additional supplies available for use will be provided by the various animal shelters. All forms will be kept at the registration desks.
2. **DOGS** – The dog area will probably be the largest, as it will entail having several smaller areas within it. It is expected that the number of dogs will outnumber other animals. Alternate housing and care provisions, which may include a local veterinarian kennel, from a local veterinarian will be made for dogs for which there is no proof of a valid vaccination and those animals which appear to be ill, injured, or too aggressive to handle. Separate areas may be provided for older dogs sensitive to noise and activity.
3. Animals, which appear ill, injured, or aggressive can be a hazard and liability. The shelter manager and animal shelter workers will ask the owner of any animal which may be a hazard to transport to a vet animal shelter for the duration of the event. It is not within the scope of our plan to manage ill, injured, or contagious pathogens. An isolation area will be provided to hold animals until they can be moved to an alternative location. As circumstances permit, we may assist with the transportation of these animals.
4. Monroe County retains the authority to refuse admittance to any animal that appears uncontrollable or too ill for our capabilities or any

animal whose owner is not complying with the minimum standards for entry.

5. Central to or near the dog area should be an animal relief area. This may be indoors or outdoors, depending on weather or other conditions. If outdoors, it is preferable that this be a secure area.
6. CATS – Cats should be housed in a separate area from dogs if possible. All animals should be in the quietest areas possible. All cats must be in a covered carrier and come with their own litter box, food, medicines, etc.
7. OTHER SMALL PETS – These include small mammals and birds. These animals should also be in covered cages away from drafts.
8. FARM ANIMALS AND EXOTIC PETS – At this time owners of these animals should make their own plans to accommodate their animals. Monroe County does not have the facilities to take care of these types of animals.

#### **E. Shut Down**

**Account for all equipment.** Logistically, all equipment should be listed as it comes into the shelter and accounted for at shutdown. All equipment will be returned to the agencies or personnel/staff who donated its use and/or to the client who came in with it.

**Clean up.** All equipment will be cleaned and disinfected. The facility will be policed for cleanliness and damage. Floors will be cleaned and disinfected. All equipment used belonging on the property will be cleaned and returned to its proper place. The animal shelter staff in each area has agreed to provide the necessary cleaning and disinfectant supplies.

### **IV. OPERATIONS**

**Shelter Kits** – There should be several shelter kits available for the first person on the scene. These kits contain necessary forms and supplies to get things up and running until other volunteers and equipment arrive.

**Registration and forms** – Pet-friendly shelter staff will have the owner complete forms and give owners a copy of the shelter agreement. The registration forms will notate whether proof of vaccinations is provided for each animal. Registration forms are to be numbered and those numbers correspond with the numbers on the cage card. A 4x6 card will be attached to the cage/carrier with animal's pertinent information. The registration forms will remain at the registration desk in the file. Animals are then taken to the triage area. Owners will be given instructions for their pets and procedures and responsibilities explained to them. When the owner retrieves his/her pets, volunteers will make

sure that all animals and equipment are accounted for. Owners will be required to sign all entrance and exit paperwork.

The best scenario would allow the clients to care for their own pets. However, at the initial stages of this plan the clients are being sheltered separately from their animals. As a result, the pet-friendly shelter staff will be responsible during the time when it is deemed unsafe for the clients to travel between the people shelter and pet shelter areas.

**Visitation** – At each of the pet-friendly shelters, Animal Control or Monroe County staff will have the authority to clear all non-personnel including pet owners from the pet-friendly shelter area before weather conditions become unsafe to return to the Special Needs shelter.

**Feeding** – If the pets are housed with their owners, or while it is safe for the owners to travel between the people shelter and pet shelter areas, the owners are responsible for feeding and watering their own animals, unless special needs dictate, in which case volunteers will be assigned to these duties. As it stands, the animals will be cared for by pet-friendly shelter staff and they will be responsible for the feedings of the animals during the times it is deemed unsafe for the owners to be traveling between the two shelter areas. If the animals belong to Special Medical Needs clients who are not housed at our shelter they will also be cared for by shelter staff and volunteers either at the pet-friendly shelter or at a location off site deemed appropriate by Animal Control staff.

Owners shall provide their own food and medicines for their pet(s). Although frequent visits with pets are encouraged, Monroe County reserves the right to limit visitation to the pet areas. Preferably no children shall be in the pet area, and the animal care volunteers will have the authority to restrict the pet areas from children visitation.

**Relief -**

**DOGS** – Unless needs dictate, including the unsafe conditions for travel between shelter areas, owners will be responsible for animal relief and exercise in designated areas. If numbers of sheltered pets require, a relief schedule will be devised. The event may prove such that an indoor relief area will need to be set up. This consists of plastic sheeting and newspaper.

**CATS** – The owner shall provide litter and a litter tray (box) and be responsible for scooping of the litter whenever possible. The pet-friendly shelter staff will be responsible if the animals are sheltered separate from their owners.

**Medication** – Unless needs dictate, including the unsafe conditions for travel between shelter areas, owners are responsible for administering all medications to pets. The owner shall make sure that any medication necessary should be given prior to the storm's arrival and as soon as it is safe after the storm. During the storm the owners will not be able to wander outside their building for safety

reasons. The owner should keep a record of medications administered to their pet in case a medical emergency occurs. .

**Sanitation** – It is expected of owners to be the primary caretakers of their pet’s cleanliness and sanitation needs. Outdoor relief areas should be cleaned (scooped) regularly. Indoor relief areas should be changed (newspaper) at least twice daily. Each owner will pick up and dispose of fouled papers and lay down clean papers for the next dog. This will help prevent spread of disease and reduce noxious odors. The plastic under the paper will be wiped down a couple of times a day and the area under the plastic will be disinfected when the shelter closes down.

Night staff or volunteers will disinfect floors nightly. Animal care volunteers shall have the authority to make adjustments to the cleaning routine schedule, as needed to protect all of the animals in the shelter.

Cages belonging to shelter will be cleaned and disinfected after each use between animals. Cages and equipment not in use will be returned to the equipment/supply area.

To provide sanitation and infection control, all staff and volunteers will wash and disinfect their hands after handling each animal, any cages, containers, cleaning any relief area, and after any contact with the pets and/or their supplies. As a part of the closing process, the Animal Control staff will clean and disinfect the “pet-sheltering” areas and return the building to it’s original condition.

#### **IV. EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES**

**Pet supplies to be provided by the owner:**

- Carriers, cages
- Food and water bowls
- Leashes, collars, harnesses
- Various foods
- Plastic sheeting
- Sheets and blankets
- Muzzles
- Flea spray
- Cat litter, trays
- Towels
- Grooming supplies
- First aid kit

#### **V. EDUCATION**

It is hoped that, as disaster preparedness messages continue to reach the public, citizens will pre-plan and as such, fewer will need public shelters. Fortunately, many hotels and motels that do not normally admit pets amend their policies in a disaster. There are many websites available that have links to pet-friendly

hotel/motels. Registered clients that have pets will be notified by mail regarding the pet pre-registration requirements. Should pet-friendly sheltering program be no longer offered, they will be notified so that they may make other arrangements for their pets.



## **PET FRIENDLY SHELTER FLOOR PLANS**

## **PET OWNER FORMS**

**The attached forms are required to be filled out by the owner before the pet(s) will be admitted into the pet-friendly shelter.**

## **VOLUNTEER FORMS**

**The attached forms are required to be filled out by all volunteers before they can assist in the shelter in any way.**